

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 001603

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARPI AND NEA/PI SONIA FRANCESKI
DEPARTMENT PASS TO USTR JASON BUNTIN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [PREL](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: BMENA ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER GETTING OFF THE
GROUND IN BAHRAIN

1. (U) Sensitive But Unclassified (Deliberative Process); not
for Internet distribution.

2. (SBU) On October 12 the Ambassador met with Minister of
Finance and National Economy Abdulla Bin Hassan Saif to
discuss implementation of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and
Bahrain's decision to host a Center for Entrepreneurial
Excellence sponsored by the G8 through the Broader Middle
East and North Africa (BMENA) Initiative. A MEPI-funded team
from the Beyster Institute of the University of California at
San Diego with experience in this type of center attended the
second half of the meeting.

Need to Keep up Momentum After FTA Signing

3. (SBU) On the FTA, the Minister said it was very important
that Bahrain not lose the momentum gained from the signing of
the FTA and move quickly to ratification. Bahrain fully
understands the difficulties with the election year
Congressional calendar and other bills that must be passed,
but it is important that the GOB be able to show something
positive soon. Ambassador agreed and said he had discussed
this already with the Crown Prince and would be following up
again with him. The Minister said that he too would follow
up with the Crown Prince.

Entrepreneurship Center

4. (SBU) Minister Saif reaffirmed Bahrain's commitment to
the entrepreneurship center and indicated Bahrain's belief
that as a G-8 initiative the center would be more successful
if it was established as a new entity. He agreed that it was
fine to start the center as part of the Bahrain Monetary
Agency (BMA)-run Bahrain Institute for Banking and Finance
(BIBF) in order to get the center up and running quickly, but
urged that it evolve into a distinct entity, separate from
the BIBF.

Beyster Institute in Bahrain

5. (SBU) Dr. Ray Smilor and Mohammed Bedrouni of the Beyster
Institute, accompanied by MEPI officer Joel Rubin, traveled
to Bahrain October 11 and 12 to meet with the GOB to discuss
the implementation of the BMENA Center for Entrepreneurial
Excellence in Bahrain. The Beyster Group met with Minister
Saif and his staff, Sheikh Ahmed Bin Mohammed Al Khalifa,
Governor of the Bahrain Monetary Agency (BMA) and his staff,
Khalid Mohamed Kanoo, Chairman of the Bahrain Chamber of
Commerce and Industry (BCCI), Afnan Rashid Al Zayani of the
Bahrain Business Women's Society, and members of the faculty
at the BIBF, who also conducted a tour of the BIBF
facilities. At each meeting Dr. Smilor presented a draft
plan for the activities of the center in its inaugural year
and biographic data for two potential U.S. directors. In a
separate meeting with Yousif Humood, Ministry of Finance and
National Economy (MOFNE) Director of Economic Planning,
Smilor agreed to return to Bahrain in early January 2005 and
to provide MOFNE with a precise description of the kind of
facilities the center would need.

Comment

6. (SBU) The Embassy is now working with the GOB on ways
Bahrainis can benefit from the FTA. Staff at MOFNE are
particularly concerned that the sector analysis now being
conducted by Booz Allen be completed before they present the
FTA to the Parliament (Arabic translation of the FTA is still
underway). We understand representatives from Booz Allen
intend to travel to Bahrain during the last week of October.
The Embassy supports this trip and will work with MOFNE staff
to ensure its success.

17. (SBU) The Beyster visit, and particularly the meeting with Saif, proved crucial to turning the idea of an entrepreneurship center into a reality. We now have a clear understanding of the Bahraini vision for the center and MOFNE appears eager to move forward. Throughout the trip Beyster received the same message: Bahrain needs this kind of center and its presence in Bahrain will help cement the country's reputation for exporting know-how in the Gulf.
MONROE